**Want a Healthier Heart? Eat These Heart-Healthy Foods!**

We recently blogged about the [importance of exercise](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/get-your-office-heart-healthy-with-the-movewithheart-pledge) when it comes to promoting heart health, and while exercise is one of the best things you can do for your heart, you shouldn’t forget about your diet! What you eat has a huge impact on the health of your heart. There are many healthy foods that provide your heart with the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants your heart needs to perform its best.

In general, a heart-healthy diet should be filled with whole-grains, healthy fats, lean protein, and lots of fruits and veggies. Highly processed foods that are loaded with unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium can cause high blood pressure and high cholesterol – which can both increase your risk of [heart disease](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/bid/334079/are-your-employees-at-risk-for-heart-disease).

In honor of American Heart Month, we think it’s the perfect time to start focusing your diet on heart-healthy foods. Luckily for you, a lot of heart-healthy foods are delicious and can be used in a variety of meals! Below are 11 heart-healthy foods that you should start including in your diet.

**Salmon.** Salmon, with its omega-3 fatty acids, is one of the best foods for your heart health! The tasty fish has been shown to reduce blood pressure and reduce your risk of blood clots. The [American Heart Association](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyDietGoals/Fish-and-Omega-3-Fatty-Acids_UCM_303248_Article.jsp%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) recommends eating fatty fish at least twice a week for optimum heart health benefits. For even more health benefits, opt for wild-caught salmon instead of farm-raised salmon when grocery shopping. Try out some of these delicious, healthy salmon recipes:

* [Honey Garlic-Glazed Salmon](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a55762/honey-garlic-glazed-salmon-recipe/)
* [Cajun Parmesan Salmon](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a54432/cajun-parmesan-salmon-recipe/)
* [Spicy Coconut Salmon](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a51340/spicy-coconut-salmon-recipe/)

**Oatmeal.** This quick, easy breakfast has a lot of heart benefits! Oatmeal is rich in soluble fiber, which can help lower cholesterol, lower blood sugar, and [boost your immune system](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/easy-natural-ways-to-boost-your-immune-system). Just be sure to avoid instant oatmeal – which can be loaded with added sugars. Overnight oats are extremely easy and quick to make, plus they even taste better than the instant version. Try out some of these oatmeal recipes:

* [Healthy Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal](http://www.geniuskitchen.com/recipe/healthy-apple-cinnamon-oatmeal-277638)
* [Peanut Butter and Banana Overnight Oats](http://domesticate-me.com/vegan-peanut-butter-and-banana-overnight-oats/)
* [Protein Overnight Oats](http://dailyburn.com/life/recipes/protein-overnight-oats-recipe/)

**Avocado.** Adding a bit of avocado to your diet can help lower LDL cholesterol (the bad type of cholesterol) and help raise HDL cholesterol (the good type of cholesterol). A healthy cholesterol level will help reduce your risk of developing heart disease. Try out some of these avocado ideas:

* [Egg White and Avocado Breakfast Sandwich](https://www.alattefood.com/egg-and-avocado-breakfast-sandwich/)
* [Avocado Mango Chicken Salad](http://eat-drink-love.com/avocado-mango-chicken-salad/)
* [Salmon Avocado Rice Balls](http://www.taste.com.au/recipes/salmon-avocado-rice-balls/642e3681-4e00-4654-8251-3c10aeaceb5e)

**Potatoes.** As long as you don’t deep fry them or load them with unhealthy toppings, a couple of servings of potatoes a week is great for your heart health. Potatoes are high in potassium, which helps lower blood pressure. They are also loaded with fiber, which has been shown to help lower the risk of heart disease. Try out some of these healthy potato dishes:

* [Healthy Potato and Spinach Casserole](http://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/healthy-potato-and-spinach-casserole)
* [Potato Soup with Spicy Shrimp](http://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/potato-soup-with-spicy-shrimp)
* [Rosemary Roasted Potatoes](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a50803/rosemary-roasted-potatoes-recipe/)

**Blueberries.** This delicious fruit is linked to a lower risk of heart attack. Blueberries contain resveratrol and anthocyanin – powerful antioxidants that have been shown to help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. According to [Health.com](http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0%2C%2C20665789%2C00.html), blueberries also contain high levels of compounds that help widen arteries, which help blood flow smoothly. Try topping off your plain Greek yogurt with blueberries for breakfast or eat a handful for a heart-healthy afternoon snack.

**Whole-grains.** Consuming enough whole-grains is an essential part of a heart-healthy diet. Whole-grain foods contain a lot of fiber that can help improve cholesterol levels. Examples of whole-grain foods include brown rice, 100% whole-grain pasta, 100% whole-wheat bread, and air-popped popcorn. Just be sure to check the ingredient label when buying packaged foods to ensure it’s truly made with whole grains.

**Nuts.** Nuts are a great snack choice for many reasons. Almonds, walnuts, and other nuts help lower cholesterol while giving you a powerful dose of fatty acids. Just be sure to stick with low sodium versions when buying pre-packaged nuts at the store.

**Legumes.** Legumes – like beans, chickpeas, or lentils – contain loads of minerals and fibers, while remaining low in saturated fat. Eating these can help keep your blood pressure in check. Try out some of these healthy meals featuring legumes:

* [Savory Bean Spinach Soup](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/259615/savory-bean-spinach-soup/)
* [Roasted Red Pepper Hummus](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/256573/roasted-red-pepper-hummus/)
* [White Bean and Veggie Salad](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/259819/white-bean-veggie-salad/)

**Extra-virgin olive oil.** Cooking your food in extra-virgin olive oil gives your body a dose of healthy fats. According to [Prevention.com](https://www.prevention.com/health/best-foods-for-heart-health/slide/25), extra-virgin olive oil also contains antioxidants that help unclog your arteries. This is why it’s important to use extra-virgin olive oil instead of regular vegetable oil – which is loaded with unhealthy fats that could increase your risk for heart disease.

**Green tea.** Sipping on some green tea can help lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels, which helps promote heart health. Green tea is also loaded with amazing antioxidants that help prevent blood clots and provide other cardiovascular benefits.

**Spinach.** This dark, leafy green is loaded with heart-healthy nutrients. It contains high levels of fiber, lutein, potassium, and folate. Spinach is also a very versatile veggie that can be steamed, sautéed, frozen, or eaten raw. Try out some of these yummy spinach recipes:

* [Blueberry Spinach Smoothie](http://www.alaskafromscratch.com/2013/05/29/blueberry-spinach-smoothie/)
* [Black Bean and Spinach Enchiladas](https://www.prevention.com/health/best-foods-for-heart-health/slide/11)
* [Spinach Chips](https://rabbitfoodformybunnyteeth.com/spinach-chips/)

With regular exercise and a heart-healthy diet, you can significantly reduce your risk of developing heart disease – America’s #1 killer. Remember that a healthy diet is all about balance. By replacing a few unhealthy choices with some heart-healthy foods each day, you will greatly improve your heart health in the long run.